

Parting Shot

A new lens for £2.99?

The Olympus 9-18mm rectilinear wide-angle lens is a superb choice for topside landscapes covering the 35mm equivalent of 18-36mm, but in the less than crystal clear waters of the UK I have struggled to find subject with this it truly does shine.

With the exception of Basking Sharks (which it is pretty useful for to be honest) the characteristics of the lens make it hard to hit a 'sweet spot' in terms of subject size, focusing distance and edge crispness. Even shooting behind a dome port it is easy to get soft edges, with the not-very-close closest shooting distance forcing you to use close your aperture to avoid the issue. In low-light conditions this means you have to ramp up the iso to a higher than ideal value to let ambient light in. Similarly as many of the UK's marine fish aren't good at getting close, the zoom range available isn't really that great for fish portraiture either. You can see why I've been struggling.

And so it was while reading through the back catalogue of UWP mags on my hard-disk that I came across my old review of the Olympus 12-50mm lens. In it the editor of this esteemed publication suggested to me that I try a +2 dioptre on the lens inside the dome port and that got me thinking about how effective that might be with the 9-18mm too. So a couple of days later I got the chance to give it a go on a night dive from a local beach.

Well, what a surprisingly big difference that small, £2.99 dioptre has made to the usefulness of the lens ? Suddenly now it can focus very close to the dome port even at the 18mm end which brings into play a whole host of other imaging possibilities.



And was my mind playing tricks on me or was it quicker to focus too? Yes with closer focusing comes more work to attain sharp edges, but coupling my 'new' lens with a snoot meant I could now compose things like the attached image. No cropping, with a subject about 40mm tall - previously out of scope for this lens. £2.99 well spent I think.

Hermit crab. Olympus E-PL5, Olympus 9-18mm at 18mm, 1/250th, f/5.6, iso400, 1xYS-D1 + snoot

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**Do you have a shot which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500 words of text and yours could be the next Parting Shot.**

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